

Syrian refugees, the overwhelming majority of whom are women and children. Communities across the country, including some in Vermont, started the process to welcome these refugees who have undergone years of security screenings and vetting. Rutland, VT, is prepared to welcome 100 refugees, but to date only two families have arrived. One of these families shared that their own children “were exposed to a lot of terror, and the sound of bombs and the sound of bullets and gunshots all day long.” This is no way to live. That is why I strongly agree with Rutland’s mayor Christopher Louras, who said accepting refugees “is just the right thing to do from a compassionate, humanitarian perspective.” We must do more.

There are other humanitarian crises impacting the world. Closer to home, ruthless armed gangs in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala continue to brutalize women and children with near impunity. We have a moral obligation to respond, and it is in our national interest to do that.

National security leaders agree that anti-Muslim rhetoric is not only contrary to our values, it also makes us less safe. FBI Director Comey told the Senate Judiciary Committee in November 2015 that part of ISIL’s narrative is to depict the United States as anti-Muslim. The Defense Department has made a similar point. House Speaker Ryan has also denounced a ban on Muslims, noting that it is “not conservatism” to impose a religious test. A bipartisan majority of the Senate Judiciary Committee agreed in December 2015 when it passed my amendment confirming that “the United States must not bar individuals from entering into the United States based on their religion.”

The chaos and confusion caused by this Executive order at our airports in the United States as well as around the world highlights the recklessness of this administration’s attempt to bar people based on their religion and national origin. The devastation this is causing to lawful immigrants and refugees fleeing violence is immeasurable. I fear for my constituents who are lawful permanent residents of the United States who also happen to be nationals of one of the seven targeted countries. Due to the widespread outrage expressed by thousands of concerned citizens and legal challenges across the country, the Trump administration has now clarified that the Executive order should not apply to legal permanent

residents. But there continues to be an understandable fear that the Trump administration may again attempt to bar them from this country. Like them, I fear that the Trump administration may again seek to bar lawful immigrants from returning to their homes, work, and families in Vermont. I also fear for the young Somali refugee in Vermont who has been patiently waiting for the completion of the resettlement process so that his pregnant wife and young son will be saved from the squalor of a refugee camp and reunited with him in Vermont. And the man from Sudan who has been waiting for his two young sons to finally be granted their visas to join him and the rest of their family. And the husband whose Libyan wife was recently granted a visa and has been waiting for the International Organization for Migration to arrange her flight to the United States. I am concerned for these families and for so many others in Vermont and around the country.

Americans are bound together by our shared ideals. Among those ideals are tolerance and diversity. They unite us as a nation; they make us stronger. That is the message we should be embracing—one of inclusion, not one of exclusion and division. Federal District Court Judge Geoffrey Crawford perfectly encapsulated this sentiment at a naturalization ceremony for 31 new Americans in Rutland, VT, last week. The summary of his powerful remarks, which he directed particularly to our new Muslim citizens, was this: “You are equal in the eyes of the law.” This simple message is clear, and unequivocal: You are welcome, you are equal, you are protected.

That is why I am introducing a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that no one should be blocked from entering the United States because of their nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender. Adoption of this resolution simply reaffirms the basic principle that this country does not have a litmus test. It will also show that the Senate will not allow fear to undermine the very principles and values that we cherish and that we have sworn to defend. The resolution is consistent with the strong bipartisan actions taken by the Senate less than 4 years ago when we passed comprehensive immigration reform legislation that included protections for refugees and asylum seekers. I urge Senators to

come together once again in support of my resolution.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 7, 2017, at 9:30 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 7, 2017, at 10 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 7, 2017, off the Senate floor immediately following the vote scheduled at 12 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the 115th Congress of the U.S. Senate on Tuesday, February 7, 2017, from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., in room SH-219 of the Senate Hart Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Zach Ormsby of my staff be granted floor privileges for the duration of the consideration of the DeVos nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate February 7, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ELISABETH PRINCE DEVOS, OF MICHIGAN, TO BE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION.

NOTICE

Incomplete record of Senate proceedings. Today’s Senate proceedings will be continued in the next issue of the Record.